

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 75

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 56

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 75—Relative to wildfires.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 7, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 75, Hollingsworth. Wildfires: United States Forest Service.

This measure would declare that there is an ongoing emergency due to the threat of wildfire, call on the federal government to take immediate measures to prevent imminent catastrophic wildfires, and request Governor Schwarzenegger to advocate at the federal level for the United States Forest Service to undertake prevention and maintenance work in the state's federal forest lands.

WHEREAS, Catastrophic wildfires continue to threaten lives, property, and the natural resources of the state; and

WHEREAS, Insurance losses for each fire season run into the billions of dollars, and insurers have paid out in excess of eight billion dollars (\$8,000,000,000) to thousands of policy holders from just the top 10 state wildfires since 1970; and

WHEREAS, State wildfires cause employment losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars; and

WHEREAS, The increase of catastrophic wildfires in the state has resulted in harmful secondary environmental effects, including diminished air and water quality, impacted watersheds, increased greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutant emissions, and threatened habitats of sensitive wildlife species; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 80 percent of the state's developed surface water supply originates on watershed lands within rural counties and near federal lands. The state's residents utilize this water for domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and other beneficial uses. These rivers, lakes, and watershed lands also serve as habitat for hundreds of species of fish and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, The state is comprised of approximately 50 percent publicly owned land and 50 percent privately owned land, but many rural counties have substantially higher percentages of publicly owned land, some as much as 98 percent; and

WHEREAS, There are over 43,000,000 acres of federal land in the state, much of which has not been adequately managed to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire; and

WHEREAS, Two of the three largest wildfires in the state in the past 100 years began on federally owned land; and

WHEREAS, Millions of dollars are spent each year fighting fires in our national forests; and

WHEREAS, The United States Forest Service spent over one billion two hundred seventy million dollars (\$1,270,000,000) on fire suppression in 2008, which exceeded 50 percent of the 2008 wildland fire budget; and

WHEREAS, The escalating costs of fighting fires on United States Forest Service land over the last 10 years has significantly diminished the available resources for the critically needed prevention measures that could minimize these catastrophic fires; and

WHEREAS, The state has made significant strides towards reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires on state and private lands, including ranking lands as to the level of fire hazard, requiring 100 feet of defensible space around homes, requiring ignition-resistant materials on all new construction that is built in a fire hazard severity zone within a state responsibility area, a local agency very high fire hazard severity zone, or a designated wildland-urban interface (WUI) fire area, and many other things to not only address preservation of life and property but mitigate the environmental damage of large scale wildfire as well; and

WHEREAS, Even with these positive mitigation efforts made by the state, there continues to be an extreme risk of catastrophic wildfires in the state and throughout the West due to unnaturally heavy fuel loads and the early drying of wildland vegetation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California declares that there is an ongoing emergency due to the threat of wildfire; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature calls on the federal government to take immediate measures to prevent imminent catastrophic wildfires; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature, together with the state's local governments, requests that Governor Schwarzenegger advocate at the federal level for the United States Forest Service to undertake prevention and maintenance work in the state's federal forest lands; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Governor and to the author for appropriate distribution.